



No Child Left Behind Frequently Asked Questions

What is a target school?

A target school is a school that missed a federal benchmark in at least one area for the first time. There are no sanctions for target schools. The Tennessee Department of Education offers technical assistance to help keep target schools from becoming high priority schools.

What is a high priority school?

A high priority school is a school that has missed the same benchmark for more than one year. There are five different levels of high priority schools: School Improvement 1, School Improvement 2, Corrective Action, Restructuring 1, and Restructuring 2.

What is adequate yearly progress (AYP)?

AYP is a measure of year-over-year student achievement. The goal of No Child Left Behind is for 100% of students to be proficient in reading, language arts and math by 2014. Standards for AYP are set to ensure that schools reach that goal.

How is student achievement assessed?

In Tennessee, students in grades 3-8 take achievement tests in math, reading and language arts. In grades 5, 8, and 11, they also take a writing assessment test. High school students take Gateway exams. This year for the first time, all student tests for grades 3-8 count toward determining proficiency in K-8 schools for this school year. Performance on these assessments is measured against standards set by the federal government to determine a school's status.

My child's school is excellent. Why is it on the list of target schools?

No Child Left Behind has very stringent requirements. A school must meet standards in every category and every subgroup – including demonstrating 95% participation on assessments – or else it does not meet the federal benchmark and is identified as a target school or high priority school. If, for example, the test was given on a day when many students were absent, it is possible that fewer than 95% of students took the test, causing the school to miss the benchmark.

What does my child's school have to do to come off the list?

If a school meets federal benchmarks for two consecutive years in the areas in which it was deficient, it will be considered to be in good standing.

What is the State Department of Education doing to improve my child's school?

Each year that a school does not meet required benchmarks, additional resources are dedicated to helping improve performance. For a list of state initiatives, visit www.tennessee.gov/education.

What is an Exemplary Educator?

Exemplary Educators (EE's) are the backbone of Tennessee's efforts to improve teaching and learning. EE's are veteran teachers, principals, or superintendents selected and trained by the department and assigned to work with high priority schools to improve student achievement.

How can I learn about school choice and supplemental services?

School districts with Title I schools identified as high priority are required to offer school choice and supplemental services. Contact your school district office for more information. Phone numbers for district offices are available on the State Department of Education Web site at www.tennessee.gov/education. You can also find information about supplemental services on the Web site at <http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/sde/> or <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/acctsupplemental.htm>. Information regarding school choice is available at <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/fppublicschchoice.htm>.

What can I do, as a parent, to help my school improve?

All schools must develop school improvement plans, and schools identified as high priority must revise those plans, with input from parents. You can contact your school to become a member of the school improvement planning team. Of course, the best thing that you can do is support your own children in their educational efforts.